

B'DIKAT HAMETZ -- THE SEARCH FOR LEAVEN

The night before the first *Seder*, one is obliged to conduct a final search for leaven. The traditional tools used for this search include a candle, a feather and a wooden spoon. Though modern technology has made the original purposes of the above largely obsolete, their use in this ritual is a time-honored tradition. For your convenience *B'Dikat Hametz* kits are available for sale in the Sisterhood Judaica Shop.

The procedure for the search is as follows. Pieces of leaven are placed around the house so that the search has a purpose. While there is no set number, there is a mystical tradition of using ten pieces of leaven. The candle is lit, and the blessing below recited before commencing the search. After all the pieces are collected, they are placed together with the candle, feather and spoon in a paper bag. The declaration nullifying one's leaven is then recited. The next morning, the bag containing the *hametz* is burnt along with the wooden spoon, etc. This year all leaven should be burnt or otherwise discarded on Monday, March 25 by 12:31 p.m. A declaration nullifying one's leaven is recited at this time also.

The ritual of *B'dikat Hametz* is a great opportunity to involve your children with Passover preparations in a religiously meaningful way. It's easy to do, and can be presented as a family game. "Hide" the pieces and have your children search for them, or vice versa. A few hints: Writing down each "hiding" place will help avoid forgetting where you've placed the pieces of leaven. Don't use leaven products that are very crumbly, and wrap each in a paper towel or napkin so that crumbs are not left behind. Wrap the bottom of the candle in foil so that wax does not drip on to furniture or carpeting.

After "hiding" your leaven and lighting the candle, the following blessing is recited:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
וְצִוָּנוּ עַל בָּעוֹר חָמֵץ.

Baruch ata Ado-nai Elo-henu melech ha-olam, a-sher kid-sha-nu b'mitz-vo-tav v'tzi-van-nu al biur hametz.

Praised are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who has sanctified us through God's commandments, commanding us to remove all leaven.

After the search of Sunday evening, March 24th, recite the following declaration:

כָּל חֲמִירָא וְחֲמִיעָא דְאַכָּא בְּרִשְׁוֹתֵי דְלָא חֲמַתִּיהּ וּדְלָא בְּעֲרַתִּיהּ
וּדְלָא יָדְעָנָא לִיהּ לְבָטֵל וְלִהְיוּ הֶפְקֵר בְּעַפְרָא דְאַרְעָא.

Kol Hamirah Va-Hamiya D'Ika Virshuti, D'la Hamitay U'dla Va-ahritay, U'dla Yedanah Lay, Libatel V'lehevey Hefker K'afrah D'ar-ah.

All leaven in my possession which I have not seen or removed, or of which I am unaware, is hereby nullified and ownerless as the dust of the earth.

On Monday morning, March 25th (Passover Eve), the following declaration is made:

כָּל חֲמִירָא וְחֲמִיעָא דְאַכָּא בְּרִשְׁוֹתֵי (דְּחֲזִיתִיהּ וּדְלָא חֲמַתִּיהּ) וּדְלָא חֲמַתִּיהּ
דְּבְעֲרַתִּיהּ וּדְלָא בְּעֲרַתִּיהּ לְבָטֵל וְלִהְיוּ הֶפְקֵר בְּעַפְרָא דְאַרְעָא.

Kol Hamirah Va-Hamiya D'Ika Virshuti, (Da Hazitay U'dla Hazitay) D'a Hamitay U'dla Hamitay, D'vi-artay U'dla Vi-artay, Libatel V'lehevey Hefker K'afrah D'ar-ah.

All leaven in my possession, whether I have seen it or not, whether I have removed it or not, is hereby nullified and ownerless as the dust of the earth.

The following reflection may also be added after the search for leaven, and/or at the time of its burning/discarding the following morning:

May it be Your will, our God and God of our ancestors, that just as I have removed all leaven from my home and from my ownership, so may I remove the evil inclination from my heart, and may You dislodge all wickedness from the face of the earth.